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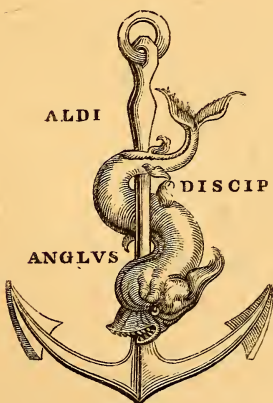
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Lincoln's Inn,  
September 22, 1840.

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BEING persuaded of nothing more than of this, that whether it be in matter of speculation or of practice, no untruth can possibly avail the patron and defender long, and that things most truly are likewise most behovefully spoken.

*Hooker.*

ANY thing will be pretended, rather than admit the necessity of internal evidence, or acknowledge, among the external proofs, the convictions and experiences of Believers, though they should be common to all the faithful in every age of the Church. But in all superstition there is a heart of unbelief; and, *vice versa*, where a man's belief is but a superficial acquiescence, credulity is the natural result and accompaniment, if only he be not required to sink into the depths of his being, where the sensual man can no longer draw breath.

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## LETTER I.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I EMPLOYED the compelled and most unwelcome leisure of severe indisposition in reading *The Confessions of a Fair Saint* in Mr. Carlyle's recent translation of the *Wilhelm Meister*, which might, I think, have been better rendered literally, *The Confessions of a Beautiful Soul*\*. This, acting in conjunction with the concluding sentences of your Letter, threw my thoughts inward on my own religious experience, and gave the immediate occasion to the following Confessions of one, who is neither fair nor saintly, but who—groaning under a deep sense of infirmity and manifold imperfection—feels the want, the necessity, of religious support;—

---

\* *Bekenntnisse einer schönen Seele.* Ed.

who cannot afford to lose any the smallest buttress, but who not only loves Truth even for itself, and when it reveals itself aloof from all interest, but who loves it with an indescribable awe, which too often withdraws the genial sap of his activity from the columnar trunk, the sheltering leaves, the bright and fragrant flower, and the foodful or medicinal fruitage, to the deep root, ramifying in obscurity and labyrinthine way-winning—

In darkness there to house unknown,  
Far underground,  
Pierc'd by no sound  
Save such as live in Fancy's ear alone,  
That listens for the uptorn mandrake's parting groan !

I should, perhaps, be a happier—at all events a more useful—man if my mind were otherwise constituted. But so it is : and even with regard to Christianity itself, like certain plants, I creep towards the light, even though it draw me away from the more nourishing warmth. Yea, I should do so, even if the light had made its way through a rent in the wall of the Temple. Glad, indeed, and grateful am I, that not in the Temple itself, but only in one or two of the side chapels—not essential to the edifice, and

probably not coeval with it—have I found the light absent, and that the rent in the wall has but admitted the free light of the Temple itself.

I shall best communicate the state of my faith by taking the creed, or system of *credenda*, common to all the Fathers of the Reformation—overlooking, as non-essential, the differences between the several Reformed Churches—according to the five main classes or sections into which the aggregate distributes itself to my apprehension. I have then only to state the effect produced on my mind by each of these, or the *quantum* of recipiency and coincidence in myself relatively thereto, in order to complete my Confession of Faith.

I. The Absolute ; the innominable Ἀὐτοπά-  
τηρ et *Causa Sui*, in whose transcendant I  
AM, as the Ground, *is* whatever *verily* is :—  
the Triune God, by whose Word and Spirit, as  
the transcendant Cause, *exists* whatever *sub-*  
*stantially* exists :—God Almighty—Father, Son,  
and Holy Ghost, undivided, unconfounded, co-  
eternal. This class I designate by the word,  
Στάσις.

II. The Eternal Possibilities ; the actuality  
of which hath not its origin in God :—*Chaos*  
*spirituale* :—Ἀπόστασις.

III. The Creation and Formation of the heaven and earth by the Redemptive Word:—the Apostasy of Man:—the Redemption of Man:—the Incarnation of the Word in the Son of Man:—the Crucifixion and Resurrection of the Son of Man:—the Descent of the Comforter:—Repentance (μετάνοια):—Regeneration:—Faith:—Prayer:—Grace: Communion with the Spirit: Conflict: Self-abasement: Assurance through the righteousness of Christ: Spiritual Growth: Love: Discipline:—Perseverance: Hope in death:—Μετάστασις—'Ανάστασις.

IV. But these offers, gifts, and graces are not for one, or for a few. They are offered to all. Even when the Gospel is preached to a single individual, it is offered to him as to one of a great Household. Not only Man, but, says St. Paul, the whole Creation, is included in the consequences of the Fall—τῆς ἀποστάσεως—; so also in those of the Change at the Redemption—τῆς μεταστάσεως, καὶ τῆς ἀναστάσεως. We too shall be raised *in the Body*. Christianity is fact no less than truth. It is spiritual, yet so as to be historical; and between these two poles there must likewise be a mid-point, in which the historical and spiritual

meet. Christianity must have its history—a history of itself, and likewise the history of its introduction, its spread, and its outward-becoming; and, as the midpoint above mentioned, a portion of these facts must be miraculous, that is, *phænomena* in nature that are beyond nature. Furthermore, the history of all historical nations must in some sense be its history;—in other words, all history must be providential, and this a providence, a preparation, and a looking-forward to Christ.

Here then we have four out of the five classes. And in all these the sky of my belief is serene, unclouded by a doubt. Would to God that my faith, that faith which works on the whole man, confirming and conforming, were but in just proportion to my belief, to the full acquiescence of my intellect, and the deep consent of my conscience! The very difficulties argue the truth of the whole scheme and system for my understanding, since I see plainly that so must the truth appear, if it be the truth.

V. But there is a Book, of two parts,—each part consisting of several books. The first part—(I speak in the character of an uninterested critic or philologist)—contains the reliques of

the literature of the Hebrew people, while the Hebrew was still the living language. The second part comprises the writings, and, with one or two inconsiderable and doubtful exceptions, all the writings of the followers of Christ within the space of ninety years from the date of the Resurrection. I do not myself think that any of these writings were composed as late as A. D. 120; but I wish to preclude all dispute. This Book I resume, as read, and yet unread,—read and familiar to my mind in all parts, but which is yet to be perused as a whole;—or rather, a work, *cujus particulas et sententiolas omnes et singulas recogniturus sum*, but the component integers of which, and their conspiracy, I have yet to study. I take up this work with the purpose to read it for the first time as I should read any other work,—as far at least as I can or dare. For I neither can, nor dare, throw off a strong and awful prepossession in its favour—certain as I am that a large part of the light and life, in and by which I see, love, and embrace the truths and the strengths co-organized into a living body of faith and knowledge in the four preceding classes, has been directly or indirectly derived to me from this sacred volume,—and unable to determine what



I do not owe to its influences. But even on this account, and because it has these inalienable claims on my reverence and gratitude, I will not leave it in the power of unbelievers to say, that the Bible is for me only what the Koran is for the deaf Turk, and the Vedas for the feeble and acquiescent Hindoo. No ; I will retire *up into the mountain*, and hold secret commune with my Bible above the contagious blastments of prejudice, and the fog-blight of selfish superstition. *For fear hath torment*. And what though *my* reason be to the power and splendor of the Scriptures but as the reflected and secondary shine of the moon compared with the solar radiance ;—yet the sun endures the occasional co-presence of the unsteady orb, and leaving it visible seems to sanction the comparison. There is a Light higher than all, even *the Word that was in the beginning* ;—the Light, of which light itself is but the *shechinah* and cloudy tabernacle ;—the Word that is light for every man, and life for as many as give heed to it. If between this Word and the written Letter I shall any where seem to myself to find a discrepancy, I will not conclude that such there actually is ; nor on the other hand will I fall under the condemna-

tion of them that would *lie for God*, but seek as I may, be thankful for what I have—and wait.

With such purposes, with such feelings, have I perused the books of the Old and New Testaments,—each book as a whole, and also as an integral part. And need I say that I have met every where more or less copious sources of truth, and power, and purifying impulses;—that I have found words for my inmost thoughts, songs for my joy, utterances for my hidden griefs, and pleadings for my shame and my feebleness? In short whatever *finds* me, bears witness for itself that it has proceeded from a Holy Spirit, even from the same Spirit, *which remaining in itself, yet regenerateth all other powers, and in all ages entering into holy souls maketh them friends of God, and prophets.* (Wisd. vii.) And here, perhaps, I might have been content to rest, if I had not learned that, as a Christian, I cannot,—must not—stand alone; or if I had not known that more than this was holden and required by the Fathers of the Reformation, and by the Churches collectively, since the Council of Nice at latest;—the only exceptions being that doubtful one of the corrupt Romish Church implied,

though not avowed, in its equalization of the Apocryphal Books with those of the Hebrew Canon \*, and the irrelevant one of the few and obscure Sects who acknowledge no historical Christianity. This somewhat more, in which Jerome, Augustine, Luther, and Hooker, were of one and the same judgment, and less than which not one of them would have tolerated—would it fall within the scope of my present doubts and objections? I hope it would not. Let only their general expressions be interpreted by their treatment of the Scriptures in detail, and I dare confidently trust that it would not. For I can no more reconcile the Doctrine which startles my belief with the practice and particular declarations of these great men, than with the convictions of my own understanding and conscience. At all events—and I cannot too early or too earnestly guard against any misapprehension of my meaning and purpose—let it be distinctly understood that my arguments and objections apply exclusively to the following Doctrine or Dogma. To the opinions which

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\* *Si quis—(Esdræ primum et secundum, Tobiam, Judith, Esther, &c.)—pro sacris et canonicis non suscepit,*  
 \*\*\* *anathema sit.* Conc. Trid. Decr. Sess. iv. *Ed.*

individual divines have advanced in lieu of this doctrine, my only objection, as far as I object, is—that I do not understand them. The precise enuntiation of this doctrine I defer to the commencement of the next Letter.

Farewell.

## LETTER II.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IN my last Letter I said that in the Bible there is more that *finds* me than I have experienced in all other books put together; that the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being; and that whatever finds me brings with it an irresistible evidence of its having proceeded from the Holy Spirit. But the Doctrine in question requires me to believe, that not only what finds me, but that all that exists in the sacred volume, and which I am bound to find therein, was—not alone inspired by, that is, composed by men under the actuating influence of, the Holy Spirit, but likewise—dictated by an Infallible Intelligence;—that the writers, each and all, were divinely informed as well as inspired. Now here all evasion, all excuse, is cut off. An Infallible Intelligence extends to

all things, physical no less than spiritual. It may convey the truth in any one of the three possible languages,—that of Sense, as objects appear to the beholder on this earth;—or that of Science, which supposes the beholder placed in the centre;—or that of Philosophy, which resolves both into a supersensual reality. But whichever be chosen—and it is obvious that the incompatibility exists only between the first and second, both of them being indifferent and of equal value to the third—it must be employed consistently; for an infallible Intelligence must intend to be intelligible, and not to deceive. And, moreover, whichever of these three languages be chosen, it must be translatable into Truth. For this is the very essence of the Doctrine, that one and the same Intelligence is speaking in the unity of a Person; which unity is no more broken by the diversity of the pipes through which it makes itself audible, than is a tune by the different instruments on which it is played by a consummate musician, equally perfect in all. One instrument may be more capacious than another, but as far as its compass extends, and in what it sounds forth, it will be true to the conception of the master. I can conceive no softenings here which would not

nullify the Doctrine, and convert it to a cloud for each man's fancy to shift and shape at will. And this Doctrine, I confess, plants the vineyard of the Word with thorns for me, and places snares in its pathways. These may be delusions of an evil spirit; but ere I so harshly question the seeming angel of light—my reason, I mean, and moral sense in conjunction with my clearest knowledge—I must inquire on what authority this Doctrine rests. And what other authority dares a truly catholic Christian admit as coercive in the final decision, but the declarations of the Book itself,—though I should not, without struggles and a trembling reluctance, gainsay even a universal tradition?

I return to the Book. With a full persuasion of soul respecting all the articles of the Christian Faith, as contained in the first four Classes, I receive willingly also the truth of the history, namely, that the Word of the Lord did come to Samuel, to Isaiah, to others;—and that the words which gave utterance to the same are faithfully recorded. But though the origin of the words, even as of the miraculous acts, be supernatural—yet the former once uttered—the latter once having taken their place among the *phænomena* of the senses, the faithful recording

of the same does not of itself imply, or seem to require, any supernatural working, other than as all truth and goodness are such. In the books of Moses, and once or twice in the prophecy of Jeremiah, I find it indeed asserted that not only the words were given, but the recording of the same enjoined by the special command of God, and doubtless executed under the special guidance of the Divine Spirit. As to all such passages, therefore, there can be no dispute; and all others in which the words are by the sacred historian declared to have been the Word of the Lord supernaturally communicated, I receive as such with a degree of confidence proportioned to the confidence required of me by the writer himself, and to the claims he himself makes on my belief.

Let us, therefore, remove all such passages, and take each Book by itself; and I repeat that I believe the writer in whatever he himself relates of his own authority, and of its origin. But I cannot find any such claim, as the Doctrine in question supposes, made by these writers, explicitly or by implication. On the contrary, they refer to other documents, and in all points express themselves as sober minded and veracious writers under ordinary circum-



stances are known to do. But, perhaps, they bear testimony, the successor to his predecessor?—Or some one of the number has left it on record, that by especial inspiration *he* was commanded to declare the plenary inspiration of all the rest?—The passages, which can without violence be appealed to as substantiating the latter position, are so few, and these so incidental\*,—the conclusion drawn from them involving likewise so obviously a *petitio principii*, namely, the supernatural dictation, word by word, of the book in which the question is found; (for until this is established, the utmost that such a text can prove, is the current belief of the writer's age and country concerning the character of the books, then called The Scriptures; )—that it cannot but seem strange, and assuredly is against all analogy of Gospel Revelation, that such a Doctrine—which, if true, must be an article of faith, and a most important, yea, essential article of faith,—should be left

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\* With only one seeming exception, the texts in question refer to the Old Testament alone. That exception is 2 Peter iii. 16. The word *λοιπὰς* (*γραφάς*) is, perhaps, not necessarily so to be interpreted; and this very text formed one of the objections to the Apostolic antiquity of the Epistle itself.

thus faintly, thus obscurely, and, if I may so say, *obitaneously*, declared and enjoined. The time of the formation and closing of the Canon unknown;—the selectors and compilers unknown, or recorded by known fabulists;—and (more perplexing still,) the belief of the Jewish Church—the belief, I mean, common to the Jews of Palestine and their more cultivated brethren in Alexandria, (no reprehension of which is to be found in the New Testament)—concerning the nature and import of the *θεοπνευστία* attributed to the precious remains of their Temple Library;—these circumstances are such, especially the last, as in effect to evacuate the Tenet, of which I am speaking, of the only meaning in which it practically means any thing at all, tangible, stedfast, or obligatory. In infallibility there are no degrees. The power of the High and Holy One is one and the same, whether the sphere, which it fills, be larger or smaller;—the area traversed by a comet, or the oracle of the house, the holy place beneath the wings of the Cherubim;—the Pentateuch of the Legislator, who drew near to the thick darkness where God was, and who spake in the cloud whence the thunderings and lightnings came, and whom God answered by a voice;—or

but a Letter of thirteen verses from the affectionate *Elder to the elect lady and her children, whom he loved in the truth*. But at no period was this the judgment of the Jewish Church respecting all the canonical books. To Moses alone—to Moses in the recording no less than in the receiving of the Law—and to all and every part of the five books, called the Books of Moses, the Jewish Doctors of the generation before, and coeval with, the Apostles assigned that unmodified and absolute *theopneusty*, which our divines, in words at least, attribute to the Canon collectively. In fact it was from the Jewish Rabbis,—who, in opposition to the Christian scheme, contended for a perfection in the Revelation by Moses, which neither required nor endured any addition, and who strained their fancies in expressing the transcendancy of the books of Moses in aid of their opinion,—that the founders of the Doctrine borrowed their notions and phrases respecting the Bible throughout. Remove the metaphorical drapery from the doctrine of the Cabbalists, and it will be found to contain the only intelligible and consistent idea of that plenary inspiration, which later divines extend to all the canonical books; as thus:—"The

Pentateuch is but *one Word*, even the Word of God; and the letters and articulate sounds, by which this Word is communicated to our human apprehensions, are likewise divinely communicated."

Now, for 'Pentateuch' substitute 'Old and New Testament,' and then I say that this is the doctrine which I reject as superstitious and unscriptural. And yet, as long as the conceptions of the Revealing Word and the Inspiring Spirit are identified and confounded, I assert that whatever says less than this, says little more than nothing. For how can absolute infallibility be blended with fallibility? Where is the infallible criterion? How can infallible truth be infallibly conveyed in defective and fallible expressions? The Jewish teachers confined this miraculous character to the Pentateuch. Between the Mosaic and the Prophetic inspiration they asserted such a difference as amounts to a diversity; and between both the one and the other, and the remaining books comprised under the title of *Hagiographa*, the interval was still wider, and the inferiority in kind, and not only in degree, was unequivocally expressed. If we take into account the habit, universal with the Hebrew Doctors, of referring

all excellent or extraordinary things to the great First Cause, without mention of the proximate and instrumental causes,—a striking illustration of which may be obtained by comparing the narratives of the same event in the Psalms and in the Historical Books;—and if we further reflect that the distinction of the Providential and the Miraculous did not enter into their forms of thinking,—at all events not into their mode of conveying their thoughts,—the language of the Jews respecting the *Hagiographi* will be found to differ little, if at all, from that of religious persons among ourselves, when speaking of an author abounding in gifts, stirred up by the Holy Spirit, writing under the influence of special grace, and the like.

But it forms no part of my present purpose to discuss the point historically, or to speculate on the formation of either Canon. Rather, such inquiries are altogether alien from the great object of my pursuits and studies, which is, to convince myself and others, that the Bible and Christianity are their own sufficient evidence. But it concerns both my character and my peace of mind to satisfy unprejudiced judges, that if my present convictions should in all other respects be found consistent with the faith

and feelings of a Christian,—and if in many and those important points they tend to secure that faith and to deepen those feelings—the words of the Apostle\*, rightly interpreted, do not require their condemnation. Enough, if what has been stated above respecting the general doctrine of the Hebrew Masters, under whom the Apostle was bred, shall remove any misconceptions that might prevent the right interpretation of his words. Farewell.

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\* 2 *Tim.* iii. 16.

## LETTER III.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

HAVING in the former two Letters defined the doctrine which I reject, I am now to communicate the views that I would propose to substitute in its place.

Before, however, I attempt to lay down on the theological chart the road-place, to which my bark has drifted, and to mark the spot and circumscribe the space, within which I swing at anchor, let me, first, thank you for, and then attempt to answer, the objections,—or at least the questions,—which you have urged upon me.

“The present Bible is the Canon, to which Christ and the Apostles referred?”

Doubtless.

“And in terms which a Christian must tremble to tamper with?”

Yea. The expressions are as direct as strong;

and a true believer will neither attempt to divert or dilute their strength.

“ The doctrine which is considered as the orthodox view seems the obvious and most natural interpretation of the texts in question ? ”

Yea, and Nay. To those whose minds are prepossessed by the Doctrine itself,—who from earliest childhood have always meant this doctrine by the very word, Bible,—the doctrine being but its exposition and paraphrase—Yea. In such minds the words of our Lord and the declarations of St. Paul can awaken no other sense. To those on the other hand, who find the doctrine senseless and self-confuting, and who take up the Bible as they do other books, and apply to it the same rules of interpretation,—Nay.

And, lastly, he who, like myself, recognises in neither of the two the state of his own mind,—who cannot rest in the former, and feels, or fears, a presumptuous spirit in the negative dogmatism of the latter,—he has his answer to seek. But so far I dare hazard a reply to the question,—In what other sense can the words be interpreted ?—beseeching you, however, to take what I am about to offer but as an attempt to delineate an arc of oscillation,—



that the eulogy of St. Paul is in no wise contravened by the opinion, to which I incline, who fully believe the Old Testament collectively, both in the composition and in its preservation, a great and precious gift of Providence;—who find in it all that the Apostle describes, and who more than believe that all which the Apostle spoke of was of divine inspiration, and a blessing intended for as many as are in communion with the Spirit through all ages. And I freely confess that my whole heart would turn away with an angry impatience from the cold and captious mortal, who, the moment I had been pouring out the love and gladness of my soul—while book after book, Law, and Truth, and Example, Oracle and lovely Hymn, and choral Song of ten thousand thousands, and accepted Prayers of Saints and Prophets, sent back, as it were, from Heaven, like doves, to be let loose again with a new freight of spiritual joys and griefs and necessities, were passing across my memory,—at the first pause of my voice, and whilst my countenance was still speaking—should ask me, whether I was thinking of the Book of Esther, or meant particularly to include the first six chapters of Daniel, or verses 6—20 of the 109th Psalm, or the last verse of the 137th

Psalm! Would any conclusion of this sort be drawn in any other analogous case? In the course of my Lectures on Dramatic Poetry I in half a score instances referred my auditors to the precious volume before me—Shakspeare—and spoke enthusiastically, both in general and with detail of particular beauties, of the plays of Shakspeare as all in their kinds, and in relation to the purposes of the writer, excellent. Would it have been fair, or according to the common usage and understanding of men, to have inferred an intention on my part to decide the question respecting Titus Andronicus, or the larger portion of the three parts of Henry VI.? Would not every genial mind understand by Shakspeare that unity or total impression comprising, and resulting from, the thousandfold several and particular emotions of delight, admiration, gratitude excited by his works? But if it be answered,—‘Aye! but we must not interpret St. Paul as we may and should interpret any other honest and intelligent writer or speaker,’—then, I say, this is the very *petitio principii* of which I complain.

Still less do the words of our Lord\* apply

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\* John v. 39.

against my view. Have I not declared—do I not begin by declaring—that whatever is referred by the sacred Penman to a direct communication from God, and wherever it is recorded that the Subject of the history had asserted himself to have received this or that command, this or that information or assurance, from a superhuman Intelligence, or where the writer in his own person, and in the character of an historian, relates that the *Word of the Lord came* unto priest, prophet, chieftain, or other individual—have I not declared that I receive the same with full belief, and admit its inappellable authority? Who more convinced than I am—who more anxious to impress that conviction on the minds of others—that the Law and the Prophets speak throughout of Christ?—That all the intermediate applications and realizations of the words are but types and repetitions—translations, as it were, from the language of letters and articulate sounds into the language of events and symbolical persons?

And here again let me recur to the aid of analogy. Suppose a Life of Sir Thomas More by his son in law, or a Life of Lord Bacon by his chaplain; that a part of the records of the

Court of Chancery belonging to these periods were lost; that in Roper's or in Rawley's biographical work there were preserved a series of *dicta* and judgments attributed to these illustrious Chancellors, many and important specimens of their table discourses, with large extracts from works written by them, and from some that are no longer extant. Let it be supposed, too, that there are no grounds, internal or external, to doubt either the moral, intellectual, or circumstantial competence of the biographers. Suppose, moreover, that wherever the opportunity existed of collating their documents and quotations with the records and works still preserved, the former were found substantially correct and faithful, the few differences in no wise altering or disturbing the spirit and purpose of the paragraphs in which they were found, and that of what was not collatable, and to which no test *ab extra* could be applied, the far larger part bore witness in itself of the same spirit and origin; and that not only by its characteristic features, but by its surpassing excellence, it rendered the chances of its having had any other author than the giant-mind, to whom the biographer ascribes it, small indeed! Now, from the nature and

objects of my pursuits, I have, we will suppose, frequent occasion to refer to one or other of these works ; for example, to Rawley's *Dicta et Facta Francisci de Verulam*. At one time I might refer to the work in some such words as,—“Remember what Francis of Verulam said or judged ;” or,—“If you believe not me, yet believe Lord Bacon.” At another time I might take the running title of the volume, and at another, the name of the biographer ;—“Turn to your Rawley ! *He* will set you right ;” or,—“*There* you will find a depth, which no research will ever exhaust ;” or whatever other strong expression my sense of Bacon's greatness and of the intrinsic worth and the value of the proofs and specimens of that greatness, contained and preserved in that volume, would excite and justify. But let my expressions be as vivid and unqualified as the most sanguine temperament ever inspired, would any man of sense conclude from them that I meant—and meant to make others believe—that not only each and all of these anecdotes, adages, decisions, extracts, incidents had been dictated, word by word, by Lord Bacon ; and that all Rawley's own observations and inferences, all the connectives and disjunctives, all the recollections of time,

place, and circumstance, together with the order and succession of the narrative, were in like manner dictated and revised by the spirit of the deceased Chancellor? The answer will be—must be;—No man in his senses! “No man in his senses—in *this* instance; but in that of the Bible it is quite otherwise;—for (I take it as an admitted point that) it—*is* quite otherwise!”

And here I renounce any advantage I might obtain for my argument by restricting the application of our Lord's and the Apostle's words to the Hebrew Canon. I admit the justice—I have long felt the full force—of the remark—“We have all that the occasion allowed.” And if the same awful authority does not apply so directly to the Evangelical and Apostolical writings as to the Hebrew Canon, yet the analogy of faith justifies the transfer. If the doctrine be less decisively Scriptural in its application to the New Testament or the Christian Canon, the temptation to doubt it is likewise less. So at least we are led to infer; since in point of fact it is the apparent or imagined contrast, the diversity of spirit which sundry individuals have believed themselves to find in the Old Testament and in the Gospel, that has given occasion

to the doubt ;—and, in the heart of thousands who yield a faith of acquiescence to the contrary, and find rest in their humility,—supplies fuel to a fearful wish that it were permitted to make a distinction.

But, lastly, you object, that—even granting that no coercive, positive, reasons for the belief—no direct and not inferred assertions,—of the plenary inspiration of the Old and New Testament, in the generally received import of the term, could be adduced, yet—in behalf of a doctrine so catholic, and during so long a succession of ages affirmed and acted on by Jew and Christian, Greek, Romish, and Protestant, you need no other answer than ;—“ Tell me first, why it should not be received ! Why should I not believe the Scriptures throughout dictated, in word and thought, by an infallible Intelligence ? ” —I admit the fairness of the retort ; and eagerly and earnestly do I answer : For every reason that makes me prize and revere these Scriptures ;—prize them, love them, revere them, beyond all other books ! *Why* should I not ? Because the Doctrine in question petrifies at once the whole body of Holy Writ with all its harmonies and symmetrical gradations,—the flexile and the rigid,—



the supporting hard and the clothing soft,—the blood *which is the life*,—the intelligencing nerves, and the rudely woven, but soft and springy, cellular substance, in which all are embedded and lightly bound together. This breathing organism, this glorious *panharmoonicon*, which I had seen stand on its feet as a man, and with a man's voice given to it, the Doctrine in question turns at once into a colossal Memnon's head, a hollow passage for a voice, a voice that mocks the voices of many men, and speaks in their names, and yet is but one voice, and the same;—and no man uttered it, and never in a human heart was it conceived. *Why* should I not?—Because the Doctrine evacuates of all sense and efficacy the sure and constant tradition, that all the several books bound up together in our precious family Bibles were composed in different and widely distant ages, under the greatest diversity of circumstances, and degrees of light and information, and yet that the composers, whether as uttering or as recording what was uttered and what was done, were all actuated by a pure and holy Spirit, one and the same—(for is there any spirit pure and holy, and yet not proceeding from God—and yet not proceeding in and with the Holy



Spirit?)—one Spirit, working diversly\*, now awakening strength, and now glorifying itself in weakness, now giving power and direction to knowledge, and now taking away the sting from error! Ere the summer and the months of ripening had arrived for the heart of the race; while the whole sap of the tree was crude, and each and every fruit lived in the harsh and bitter principle; even then this Spirit withdrew its chosen ministers from the false and guilt-making centre of Self. It converted the wrath into a form and an organ of love, and on the passing storm-cloud impressed the fair rainbow of promise to all generations. Put the lust of Self in the forked lightning, and would it not be a Spirit of Moloch? But God maketh the lightnings his ministers, fire and hail, vapors and stormy winds fulfilling his word.

*Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord; curse ye bitterly the inhabitants there-*

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\* I use the adverb *diversly* from the adjective *divers* in order to distinguish the Scriptural and Pauline sense of the word—the sense in which I here use it—from the logical usage of the term *diversely* from *diverse*, that is, different in kind, heterogeneous. The same Spirit may act and impel diversly, but, being a good Spirit, it cannot act diversely.

*of*—sang Deborah. Was it that she called to mind any personal wrongs—rapine or insult—that she or the house of Lapidoth had received from Jabin or Sisera? No; she had dwelt under her palm-tree in the depth of the mountain. But she was a *mother in Israel*; and with a mother's heart, and with the vehemency of a mother's and a patriot's love, she had shot the light of love from her eyes, and poured the blessings of love from her lips, on the people that had *jeoparded their lives unto the death* against the oppressors; and the bitterness, awakened and borne aloft by the same love, she precipitated in curses on the selfish and coward recreants who *came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord, against the mighty*. As long as I have the image of Deborah before my eyes, and while I throw myself back into the age, country, circumstances, of this Hebrew Bonduca in the not yet tamed chaos of the spiritual creation;—as long as I contemplate the impassioned, high-souled, heroic woman in all the prominence and individuality of will and character,—I feel as if I were among the first ferments of the great affections—the proplastic waves of the microcosmic chaos, swelling up against—and yet towards—the outspread

wings of the Dove that lies brooding on the troubled waters. So long all is well,—all replete with instruction and example. In the fierce and inordinate I am made to know and be grateful for the clearer and purer radiance which shines on a Christian's paths, neither blunted by the preparatory veil, nor crimsoned in its struggle through the all-enwrapping mist of the world's ignorance: whilst in the self-oblivion of these heroes of the Old Testament, their elevation above all low and individual interests,—above all, in the entire and vehement devotion of their total being to the service of their divine Master, I find a lesson of humility, a ground of humiliation, and a shaming, yet rousing, example of faith and fealty. But let me once be persuaded that all these heart-awakening utterances of human hearts—of men of like faculties and passions with myself, mourning, rejoicing, suffering, triumphing—are but as a *Divina Commedia* of a super-human—O bear with me, if I say—Ventriloquist;—that the royal Harper, to whom I have so often submitted myself as a *many-stringed instrument* for his fire-tipt fingers to traverse, while every several nerve of emotion, passion, thought, that thrids the flesh-and-blood of our

common humanity, responded to the touch,—that this *sweet Psalmist of Israel* was himself as mere an instrument as his harp, an *automaton* poet, mourner, and suppliant;—all is gone,—all sympathy, at least, and all example. I listen in awe and fear, but likewise in perplexity and confusion of spirit.

Yet one other instance, and let this be the crucial test of the Doctrine. Say that the Book of Job throughout was dictated by an infallible Intelligence. Then reperuse the book, and still, as you proceed, try to apply the tenet: try if you can even attach any sense or semblance of meaning to the speeches which you are reading. What! were the hollow truisms, the unsufficing half-truths, the false assumptions and malignant insinuations of the supercilious bigots, who corruptly defended the truth:—were the impressive facts, the piercing outcries, the pathetic appeals, and the close and powerful reasoning with which the poor sufferer—smarting at once from his wounds, and from the oil of vitriol which the orthodox *liars for God* were dropping into them—impatiently, but uprightly and holily, controverted this truth, while in will and in spirit he clung to it;—were both dictated by an infallible Intelligence?—Alas! if I may

judge from the manner in which both indiscriminately are recited, quoted, appealed to, preached upon, by the *routiniers* of desk and pulpit, I cannot doubt that they think so,—or rather, without thinking, take for granted that so they are to think ;—the more readily, perhaps, because the so thinking supersedes the necessity of all after-thought.

Farewell.



## LETTER IV.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You reply to the conclusion of my Letter :  
“ What have we to do with *routiniers* ? *Quid mihi cum homunculis putata putide reputantibus* ? Let nothings count for nothing, and the dead bury the dead ! Who but such ever understood the Tenet in this sense ? ” —

In what sense then, I rejoin, do others understand it ? If, with exception of the passages already excepted, namely, the recorded words of God—concerning which no Christian can have doubt or scruple,—the Tenet in this sense be inapplicable to the Scripture, destructive of its noblest purposes, and contradictory to its own express declarations,—again and again I ask :—What am I to substitute ? What other sense is conceivable that does not destroy the doctrine which it professes to interpret—that does not

convert it into its own negative? As if a geometrician should name a sugar loaf an ellipse, adding—"By which term I here mean a cone"—; and then justify the misnomer on the pretext that the ellipse is among the conic sections! And yet—notwithstanding the repugnancy of the Doctrine, in its unqualified sense, to Scripture, Reason, and Common Sense theoretically, while to all practical uses it is intractable, unmalleable, and altogether unprofitable—notwithstanding its irrationality, and in the face of your expostulation, grounded on the palpableness of its irrationality,—I must still avow my belief that, however flittingly and unsteadily, as through a mist, it *is* the Doctrine which the generality of our popular divines receive as orthodox, and this the sense which they attach to the words.

For on what other ground can I account for the whimsical *subintelligitur*s of our numerous harmonists,—for the curiously inferred facts, the inventive circumstantial detail, the complementary and supplemental history which, in the utter silence of all historians and absence of all historical documents, they bring to light by mere force of logic?—And all to do away some half-score apparent discrepancies in the



chronicles and memoirs of the Old and New Testaments;—discrepancies so analogous to what is found in all other narratives of the same story by several narrators,—so analogous to what is found in all other known and trusted histories by contemporary historians, when they are collated with each other, (nay, not seldom when either historian is compared with himself,) as to form in the eyes of all competent judges a characteristic mark of the genuineness, independency, and (if I may apply the word to a book,) the veraciousness of each several document; a mark the absence of which would warrant a suspicion of collusion, invention, or at best of servile transcription;—discrepancies so trifling in circumstance and import, that, although in some instances it is highly probable, and in all instances, perhaps, possible that they are only apparent and reconcilable, no wise man would care a straw whether they were real or apparent, reconciled or left in harmless and friendly variance. What, I ask, could have induced learned and intelligent divines to adopt or sanction subterfuges, which, neutralizing the ordinary *criteria* of full or defective evidence in historical documents, would, taken as a general rule, render all collation and cross-

examination of written records ineffective, and obliterate the main character by which authentic histories are distinguished from those traditional tales, which each successive reporter enlarges and fashions to his own fancy and purpose, and every different edition of which more or less contradicts the other? Allow me to create chasms *ad libitum*, and *ad libitum* to fill them up with imagined facts and incidents, and I would almost undertake to harmonize Falstaff's account of the rogues in buckram into a coherent and consistent narrative. What, I say, could have tempted grave and pious men thus to disturb the foundation of the Temple, in order to repair a petty breach or rat-hole in the wall, or fasten a loose stone or two in the outer court, if not an assumed necessity arising out of the peculiar character of Bible history?

The substance of the syllogism, by which their procedure was justified to their own minds, can be no other than this. That, without which two assertions—both of which *must* be alike true and correct—would contradict each other, and consequently be, one or both, false or incorrect, must itself be true. But every word and syllable existing in the original text of the Canonical Books, from the *Cherethi*

and *Phelethi*\* of David to the name in the copy of a family register, the site of a town, or the course of a river, were dictated to the sacred *amanuensis* by an infallible Intelligence. Here there can be neither more nor less. Important or unimportant gives no ground of difference; and the number of the writers as little. The secretaries may have been many,—the historian was one and the same, and he infallible. This is the *minor* of the syllogism; and if it could be proved, the conclusion would be at least plausible; and there would be but one objection to the procedure, namely, its uselessness. For if it have been proved already, what need of proving it over again, and by means—the removal, namely, of apparent contradictions—which the infallible Author did not think good to employ? But if it have not been proved, what becomes of the argument which derives its whole force and legitimacy from the assumption?

In fact, it is clear that the harmonists and their admirers held and understood the Doctrine literally. And must not that divine likewise have so understood it, who, in answer to a

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\* 2 Sam. xx. 23. 1 Chron. xviii. 17.—Ed.

question concerning the transcendant blessedness of Jael, and the righteousness of the act, in which she inhospitably, treacherously, perfidiously, murdered sleep, the confiding sleep, closed the controversy by observing that he wanted no better morality than that of the Bible, and no other proof of an action's being praiseworthy than that the Bible had declared it worthy to be praised;—an observation, as applied in this instance, so slanderous to the morality and moral spirit of the Bible as to be inexplicable, except as a consequence of the Doctrine in dispute?—But let a man be once fully persuaded that there is no difference between the two positions—"The Bible contains the religion revealed by God"—and—"Whatever is contained in the Bible is religion, and was revealed by God"—; and that whatever can be said of the Bible, collectively taken, may and must be said of each and every sentence of the Bible, taken for and by itself;—and I no longer wonder at these paradoxes. I only object to the inconsistency of those who profess the same belief, and yet affect to look down with a contemptuous or compassionate smile on John Wesley for rejecting the Copernican system as incompatible therewith; or who

exclaim "Wonderful!" when they hear that Sir Matthew Hale sent a crazy old woman to the gallows in honor of the Witch of Endor \*. In the latter instance it might, I admit, have been an erroneous (though even at this day the all but universally received) interpretation of the word, which we have rendered by *witch*;—but I challenge these divines and their adherents to establish the compatibility of a belief in the modern astronomy and natural philosophy with their and Wesley's doctrine respecting the inspired Scriptures, without reducing

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\* He sent two, nor does it appear that the poor creatures were at all crazy.

Rose Cullender and Amy Duny, widows, of Lowestoff, Suffolk, were tried for witchcraft, on the 10th of March, 1665, at Bury St. Edmunds. Sir M. Hale told the jury, "that he would not repeat the evidence unto them, lest by so doing he should wrong the evidence on the one side or the other. Only this acquainted them, that they had two things to inquire after: first, whether or no these children were bewitched; secondly, whether the prisoners at the bar were guilty of it.

*"That there were such creatures as witches, he made no doubt at all. For, first, the Scriptures had affirmed so much. Secondly, the wisdom of all nations had provided laws against such persons, which is an argument of their confidence of such a crime. And such hath been the judgment of this kingdom, as appears by that Act of Parliament, which hath provided punishments propor-*

the Doctrine itself to a plaything of wax ;—or rather to a half-inflated bladder, which, when the contents are rarefied in the heat of rhetorical generalities, swells out round, and without a crease or wrinkle ; but bring it into the cool temperature of particulars, and you may press, and as it were except, what part you like—so it be but one part at a time—between your thumb and finger.

Now, I pray you, which is the more honest, nay, which the more reverential, proceeding,—to play at fast and loose in this way ; or to say

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tionable to the quality of the offence. And desired them strictly to observe their evidence ; and desired the great God of heaven to direct their hearts in the weighty thing they had in hand. For to condemn the innocent, and to let the guilty go free, were both an abomination to the Lord.”

They were found guilty on thirteen indictments. The bewitched got well of all their pains the moment after the conviction ; “ only Susan Chandler felt a pain like pricking of pins in her stomach.”

“ The Judge and all the Court felt fully satisfied with the verdict, and thereupon gave judgment against the witches that they should be hanged.”

“ They were much urged to confess, but would not.”

“ They were executed on Monday, the 17th of March following, but they confessed nothing.”—*State Trials*, vi. p. 700. *Ed.*

at once, "See here in these several writings one and the same Holy Spirit, now sanctifying a chosen vessel, and fitting it for the reception of heavenly truths proceeding immediately from the mouth of God, and elsewhere working in frail and fallible men like ourselves, and like ourselves instructed by God's word and laws?"

—The first Christian martyr had the form and features of an ordinary man, nor are we taught to believe that these features were miraculously transfigured into superhuman symmetry; but *he being filled with the Holy Ghost, they that looked stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel*. Even so has it ever been, and so it ever will be, with all who with humble hearts and a rightly disposed spirit scan the Sacred Volume. And they who read it with *an evil heart of unbelief*, and an alien spirit—what boots for them the assertion that every sentence was miraculously communicated to the nominal author by God himself? Will it not rather present additional temptations to the unhappy scoffers, and furnish them with a pretext of self-justification?

When, in my third Letter, I first echoed the question, 'Why should I not?'—the answers came crowding on my mind. I am well content,

however, to have merely suggested the main points, in proof of the positive harm which, both historically and spiritually, our religion sustains from this Doctrine. Of minor importance, yet not to be overlooked, are the forced and fantastic interpretations, the arbitrary allegories and mystic expansions of proper names, to which this indiscriminate Bibliolatriy furnished fuel, spark, and wind. A still greater evil, and less attributable to the visionary humor and weak judgment of the individual expositors, is the literal rendering of Scripture in passages, which the number and variety of images employed in different places, to express one and the same verity, plainly mark out for figurative. And, lastly, add to all these the strange—in all other writings unexampled—practice of bringing together into logical dependency detached sentences from books composed at the distance of centuries, nay, sometimes a *millennium*, from each other, under different dispensations, and for different objects. Accommodations of elder Scriptural phrases—that favourite ornament and garnish of Jewish eloquence—incidental allusions to popular notions, traditions, apologues—(for example, the dispute between the Devil and the Archangel



Michael about the body of Moses. *Jude* 9.),—fancies and anachronisms imported from the synagogue of Alexandria into Palestine by, or together with, the Septuagint Version, and applied as mere *argumenta ad homines*—(for example, the delivery of the Law by the disposition of Angels, *Acts* vii. 53. *Gal.* iii. 19. *Heb.* ii. 2.)—these, detached from their context, and, contrary to the intention of the sacred writer, first raised into independent *theses*, and then brought together to produce or sanction some new *credendum*, for which neither separately could have furnished a pretence! By this strange mosaic, Scripture texts have been worked up into passable likenesses of Purgatory, Popery, the Inquisition, and other monstrous abuses. But would you have a Protestant instance of the superstitious use of Scripture arising out of this dogma? Passing by the Cabbala of the Hutchinsonian School as the dotage of a few weak-minded individuals, I refer you to Bishop Hacket's Sermons on the Incarnation. And if you have read the same author's Life of Archbishop Williams, and have seen and felt (as every reader of this latter work must see and feel,) his talent, learning, acuteness, and robust good sense, you will have

no difficulty in determining the quality and character of a dogma, which could engraft such fruits on such a tree \*.

It will perhaps appear a paradox, if, after all these reasons, I should avow that they weigh less in my mind against the Doctrine, than the motives usually assigned for maintaining and enjoining it. Such, for instance, are the arguments drawn from the anticipated loss and damage that would result from its abandonment; as that it would deprive the Christian world of its only infallible arbiter in questions of Faith and Duty, suppress the only common and inappellable tribunal; that the Bible is the

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\* 'Did not the Life of Archbishop Williams prove otherwise, I should have inferred from these Sermons that Hacket from his first boyhood had been used to make themes, epigrams, copies of verses, and the like on all the feasts and festivals of the Church; had found abundant nourishment for this humour of points, quirks, and quiddities, in the study of the Fathers and glossers; and remained a *junior soph* all his life long.' \* \* \* \*  
 'Let any competent judge read Hacket's Life of Archbishop Williams, and then these Sermons, and so measure the stultifying, nugifying, effect of a blind and uncritical study of the Fathers, and the exclusive prepossession in favour of their authority in the minds of many of our Church dignitaries in the reign of Charles I.' *Lit. Remains*. III. pp. 175 and 183.—Ed.

only religious bond of union and ground of unity among Protestants, and the like. For the confutation of this whole reasoning it might be sufficient to ask :—Has it produced these effects? Would not the contrary statement be nearer to the fact? What did the Churches of the first four centuries hold on this point? To what did they attribute the rise and multiplication of heresies? Can any learned and candid Protestant affirm that there existed and exists no ground for the charges of Bossuet and other eminent Romish divines? It is no easy matter to know how to handle a party maxim, so framed that, with the exception of a single word, it expresses an important truth, but which by means of that word is made to convey a most dangerous error.

The Bible is the appointed conservatory, an indispensable criterion, and a continual source and support of true Belief. But that the Bible is the sole source; that it not only contains, but constitutes, the Christian Religion; that it is, in short, a Creed, consisting wholly of articles of Faith; that consequently we need no rule, help, or guide, spiritual or historical, to teach us what parts are and what are not articles of Faith—all being such—, and the difference

between the Bible and the Creed being this, that the clauses of the latter are all unconditionally necessary to salvation, but those of the former conditionally so, that is, as soon as the words are known to exist in any one of the canonical Books; and that, under this limitation, the belief is of the same necessity in both, and not at all affected by the greater or lesser importance of the matter to be believed;—this scheme differs widely from the preceding, though its adherents often make use of the same words in expressing their belief. And this latter scheme, I assert, was brought into currency by and in favour of those by whom the operation of grace, the aids of the Spirit, the necessity of regeneration, the corruption of our nature, in short, all the peculiar and spiritual mysteries of the Gospel were explained and diluted away.

And how have these men treated this very Bible?—I, who indeed prize and reverence this sacred library, as of all outward means and conservatives of Christian faith and practice the surest and the most reflective of the inward Word;—I, who hold that the Bible contains the religion of Christians, but who dare not say that whatever is contained in the Bible is the Christian religion, and who shrink from all

question respecting the comparative worth and efficacy of the written Word as weighed against the preaching of the Gospel, the discipline of the Churches, the continued succession of the Ministry, and the communion of Saints, lest by comparing I should seem to detach them;—I tremble at the processes, which the Grotian divines without scruple carry on in their treatment of the sacred Writers, as soon as any texts declaring the peculiar tenets of our Faith are cited against them,—even tenets and mysteries which the believer at his baptism receives as the title-writ and bosom-roll of his adoption; and which, according to my scheme, every Christian born in Church-membership ought to bring with him to the study of the sacred Scriptures as the master-key of interpretation. Whatever the doctrine of infallible dictation may be in itself, in *their* hands it is to the last degree nugatory, and to be paralleled only by the Romish tenet of Infallibility,—in the existence of which all agree, but where, and in whom, it exists *stat adhuc sub lite*. Every sentence found in a canonical Book, rightly interpreted, contains the *dictum* of an infallible Mind;—but what the right interpretation is,—or whether the very words now extant are corrupt or

genuine—must be determined by the industry and understanding of fallible and alas ! more or less prejudiced theologians.

And yet I am told that this Doctrine must not be resisted or called in question, because of its fitness to preserve unity of faith, and for the prevention of schism and sectarian by-ways !—Let the man who holds this language trace the history of Protestantism, and the growth of sectarian divisions, ending with Dr. Hawker's *ultra*-Calvinistic Tracts, and Mr. Belsham's New Version of the Testament. And then let him tell me that for the prevention of an evil which already exists, and which the boasted preventive itself might rather seem to have occasioned, I must submit to be silenced by the first learned Infidel, who throws in my face the blessing of Deborah, or the cursings of David, or the Grecisms and heavier difficulties in the biographical chapters of the Book of Daniel, or the hydrography and natural philosophy of the Patriarchal ages.—I must forego the means of silencing, and the prospect of convincing, an alienated brother, because I must not thus answer :—" My Brother ! What has all this to do with the truth and the worth of Christianity ? If you reject *a priori* all

communion with the Holy Spirit, there is indeed a chasm between us, over which we cannot even make our voices intelligible to each other. But if—though but with the faith of a Seneca or an Antonine—you admit the co-operation of a divine Spirit in souls desirous of good, even as the breath of heaven works variously in each several plant according to its kind, character, period of growth, and circumstance of soil, clime, and aspect;—on what ground can you assume that its presence is incompatible with all imperfection in the subject,—even with such imperfection as is the natural accompaniment of the unripe season? If you call your gardener or husbandman to account for the plants or crops he is raising, would you not regard the special purpose in each, and judge of each by that which it was tending to? Thorns are not flowers, nor is the husk serviceable. But it was not for its thorns, but for its sweet and medicinal flowers that the rose was cultivated; and he who cannot separate the husk from the grain, wants the power because sloth or malice has prevented the will. I demand for the Bible only the justice which you grant to other books of grave authority, and to other proved and acknowledged benefactors of mankind. Will



you deny a spirit of wisdom in Lord Bacon, because in particular facts he did not possess perfect science, or an entire immunity from the positive errors which result from imperfect insight? A Davy will not so judge his great predecessor. For he recognizes the spirit that is now working in himself, and which under similar defects of light and obstacles of error had been his guide and guardian in the morning twilight of his own genius. Must not the kindly warmth awaken and vivify the seed, in order that the stem may spring up and rejoice in the light? As the genial warmth to the informing light, even so is the pre-disposing Spirit to the revealing Word."

If I should reason thus—but why do I say *if*?—I have reasoned thus with more than one serious and well-disposed Sceptic; and what was the answer?—" *You* speak rationally, but seem to forget the subject. I have frequently attended meetings of the British and Foreign Bible Society, where I have heard speakers of every denomination, Calvinist and Arminian, Quaker and Methodist, Dissenting Ministers and Clergymen, nay, dignitaries of the Established Church,—and still have I heard the same doctrine,—that the Bible was not to be



regarded or reasoned about in the way that other good books are or may be;—that the Bible was different in kind, and stood by itself. By some indeed this doctrine was rather implied than expressed, but yet evidently implied. But by far the greater number of the speakers it was asserted in the strongest and most unqualified words that language could supply. What is more, their principal arguments were grounded on the position, that the Bible throughout was dictated by Omniscience, and therefore in all its parts infallibly true and obligatory, and that the men, whose names are prefixed to the several books or chapters, were in fact but as different pens in the hand of one and the same Writer, and the words the words of God himself;—and that on this account all notes and comments were superfluous, nay, presumptuous,—a profane mixing of human with divine, the notions of fallible creatures, with the oracles of Infallibility,—as if God's meaning could be so clearly or fitly expressed in man's as in God's own words! But how often you yourself must have heard the same language from the pulpit!—”

What could I reply to this?—I could neither deny the fact, nor evade the conclusion,—

namely, that such is at present the popular belief. Yes—I at length rejoined—I have heard this language from the pulpit, and more than once from men who in any other place would explain it away into something so very different from the literal sense of their words as closely to resemble the contrary. And this, indeed, is the peculiar character of the doctrine, that you cannot diminish or qualify but you reverse it. I have heard this language from men, who knew as well as myself that the best and most orthodox divines have in effect disclaimed the doctrine, inasmuch as they confess it cannot be extended to the words of the sacred Writers, or the particular import,—that therefore the Doctrine does not mean all that the usual wording of it expresses, though what it does mean, and why they continue to sanction this hyperbolical wording, I have sought to learn from them in vain. But let a thousand orators blazon it at public meetings, and let as many pulpits echo it, surely it behoves you to inquire whether you cannot be a Christian on your own faith; and it cannot but be beneath a wise man to be an Infidel on the score of what other men think fit to include in their Christianity!

Now suppose—and, believe me, the supposition will vary little from the fact—that in consequence of these views the Sceptic's mind had gradually opened to the reception of all the truths enumerated in my first Letter. Suppose that the Scriptures themselves from this time had continued to rise in his esteem and affection—the better understood, the more dear; as in the countenance of one, whom through a cloud of prejudices we have at last learned to love and value above all others, new beauties dawn on us from day to day, till at length we wonder how we could at any time have thought it other than most beautiful. Studying the sacred Volume in the light and in the freedom of a faith already secured, at every fresh meeting my Sceptic friend has to tell me of some new passage, formerly viewed by him as a dry stick on a rotten branch, which has *budded*, and like the rod of Aaron, *brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms; and yielded almonds*. Let these results, I say, be supposed,—and shall I still be told that my friend is nevertheless an alien in the household of Faith? Scrupulously orthodox as I know you to be, will you tell me that I ought to have left this Sceptic as I found him, rather than attempt his conversion by such

means; or that I was deceiving him, when I said to him:—

“ Friend ! The truth revealed through Christ has its evidence in itself, and the proof of its divine authority in its fitness to our nature and needs;—the clearness and cogency of this proof being proportionate to the degree of self-knowledge in each individual hearer. Christianity has likewise its historical evidences, and these as strong as is compatible with the nature of history, and with the aims and objects of a religious dispensation. And to all these Christianity itself, as an existing Power in the world, and Christendom as an existing Fact, with the no less evident fact of a progressive expansion, give a force of moral demonstration that almost supersedes particular testimony. These proofs and evidences would remain unshaken, even though the sum of our religion were to be drawn from the theologians of each successive century, on the principle of receiving that only as divine, which should be found in all,—*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*. Be only, my Friend ! as orthodox a believer as you would have abundant reason to be, though from some accident of birth, country, or education the precious boon of the Bible, with its addi-

tional evidence, had up to this moment been concealed from you;—and then read its contents with only the same piety which you freely accord on other occasions to the writings of men, considered the best and wisest of their several ages! What you find therein coincident with your pre-established convictions, you will of course recognize as the Revealed Word, while, as you read the recorded workings of the Word and the Spirit in the minds, lives, and hearts of spiritual men, the influence of the same Spirit on your own being, and the conflicts of grace and infirmity in your own soul, will enable you to discern and to know in and by what spirit they spake and acted,—as far at least as shall be needful for you, and in the times of your need.

“ Thenceforward, therefore, your doubts will be confined to such parts or passages of the received Canon, as seem to you irreconcilable with known truths, and at variance with the tests given in the Scriptures themselves, and as shall continue so to appear after you have examined each in reference to the circumstances of the Writer or Speaker, the dispensation under which he lived, the purpose of the particular passage, and the intent and object of

the Scriptures at large. Respecting these, decide for yourself: and fear not for the result. I venture to tell it you before hand. The result will be, a confidence in the judgment and fidelity of the compilers of the Canon increased by the apparent exceptions. For they will be found neither more nor greater than may well be supposed requisite, on the one hand, to prevent us from sinking into a habit of slothful, indiscriminating, acquiescence, and on the other to provide a check against those presumptuous fanatics, who would rend *the Urim and Thummim from the breastplate of judgment*, and frame oracles by private divination from each letter of each disjointed gem, uninterpreted by the Priest, and deserted by the Spirit, which shines in the parts only as it pervades and irradiates the whole."

Such is the language in which I have addressed a halting friend,—halting, yet with his face toward the right path. If I have erred, enable me to see my error. Correct me, or confirm me.

Farewell.

## LETTER V.

YES! my dear Friend, it is my conviction that in all ordinary cases the knowledge and belief of the Christian Religion should precede the study of the Hebrew Canon. Indeed with regard to both Testaments, I consider oral and catechismal instruction as the preparative provided by Christ himself in the establishment of a visible Church. And to make the Bible, apart from the truths, doctrines, and spiritual experiences contained therein, the subject of a special article of faith, I hold an unnecessary and useless abstraction, which in too many instances has the effect of substituting a barren acquiescence in the letter for the lively *faith that cometh by hearing*; even as the hearing is productive of this faith, because it is the word of God that is heard and preached. (*Rom. x. 8. 17.*) And here I mean

the written word preserved in the armoury of the Church to be the sword of faith *out of the mouth* of the preacher, as Christ's ambassador and representative, (*Rev. i. 16.*) and out of the heart of the believer, from generation to generation. Who shall dare dissolve or loosen this holy bond, this divine reciprocity, of Faith and Scripture? Who shall dare enjoin aught else as an object of saving faith, beside the truths that appertain to salvation? The imposers take on themselves a heavy responsibility, however defensible the opinion itself, as an opinion, may be. For by imposing it, they counteract their own purposes. They antedate questions, and thus in all cases aggravate the difficulty of answering them satisfactorily. And not seldom they create difficulties that might never have occurred. But, worst of all, they convert things trifling or indifferent into mischievous pretexts for the wanton, fearful, difficulties for the weak, and formidable objections for the inquiring. For what man *fearing God* dares think any the least point indifferent, which he is required to receive as God's own immediate word miraculously infused, miraculously recorded, and by a succession of miracles preserved unblended and without change?—



Through all the pages of a large and multifold volume, at each successive period, at every sentence, must the question recur:—"Dare I believe—do I in my heart believe—these words to have been dictated by an infallible reason, and the immediate utterance of Almighty God?"—No! It is due to Christian charity that a question so awful should not be put unnecessarily, and should not be put out of time. The necessity I deny. And out of time the question must be put, if after enumerating the several articles of the Catholic Faith I am bound to add:—"and further you are to believe with equal faith, as having the same immediate and miraculous derivation from God, whatever else you shall hereafter read in any of the sixty six books collected in the Old and New Testaments."

I would never say this. Yet let me not be misjudged as if I treated the Scriptures as a matter of indifference. I would not say this: but where I saw a desire to believe, and a beginning love of Christ, I would there say:—"There are likewise sacred Writings, which, taken in connection with the institution and perpetuity of a visible Church, all believers revere as the most precious boon of God, next to Christianity itself, and attribute both their

communication and preservation to an especial Providence. In them you will find all the revealed truths, which have been set forth and offered to you, clearly and circumstantially recorded; and, in addition to these, examples of obedience and disobedience both in states and individuals, the lives and actions of men eminent under each dispensation, their sentiments, maxims, hymns, and prayers,—their affections, emotions and conflicts;—in all which you will recognize the influence of the Holy Spirit, with a conviction increasing with the growth of your own faith and spiritual experience.”

Farewell.

## LETTER VI.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

IN my last two Letters I have given the state of the argument, as it would stand between a Christian thinking as I do, and a serious well-disposed Deist. I will now endeavour to state the argument, as between the former and the advocates for the popular belief,—such of them, I mean, as are competent to deliver a dispassionate judgment in the cause. And again, more particularly, I mean the learned and reflecting part of them, who are influenced to the retention of the prevailing dogma by the supposed consequences of a different view, and, especially, by their dread of conceding to all alike, simple and learned, the privilege of picking and choosing the Scriptures that are to be received as binding on their consciences. Between these persons and myself the contro-

versy\* may be reduced to a single question:—

Is it safer for the Individual, and more conducive to the interests of the Church of Christ, in its twofold character of pastoral and militant, to conclude thus:—The Bible is the Word of God, and therefore true, holy, and in all parts unquestionable;—or thus,—The Bible, considered in reference to its declared ends and purposes, is true and holy, and for all who seek truth with humble spirits an unquestionable guide, and therefore it is the Word of God?—

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\* It is remarkable that both parties might appeal to the same text of St. Paul,—*πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος καὶ ὠφέλιμος πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, κ. τ. λ.* (2 Tim. iii. 16), which favors the one or the other opinion accordingly as the words are construed; and which, again, is the more probable construction, depends in great measure on the preference given to one or other of two different readings, the one having and the other omitting the conjunction copulative *καὶ*.

[The English version is:—*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable, &c.* And in this rendering of the original the English is countenanced by the established Version of the Dutch Reformed Church:—*Alle de Schrift is van Godt ingegeven, ende is nuttigh &c.* And by Diodati:—*Tutta la Scrittura è divinamente ispirata, ed util, &c.* And by Martin: *Toute l'Ecriture*

In every generation, and wherever the light of Revelation has shone, men of all ranks, conditions, and states of mind have found in this Volume a correspondent for every movement toward the Better felt in their own hearts. The needy soul has found supply, the feeble a help, the sorrowful a comfort ; yea, be the reciprocity the least that can consist with moral life, there is an answering grace ready to enter. The Bible has been found a spiritual World,—spiritual, and yet at the same time outward and common to all. You in one place, I in another,

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*est divinement inspirée, et profitable, &c.* And by Beza :—*Tota Scriptura divinitus est inspirata, et utilis, &c.*

The other rendering is supported by the Vulgate :—*Omnis Scriptura, divinitus inspirata, utilis est ad, &c.* By Luther :—*Denn alle Schrift von Gott eingegeben, ist nütze zur, &c.* And by Calmet :—*Toute l'Ecriture, qui est inspirée de Dieu, est utile, &c.* And by the common Spanish translation :—*Toda Escritura, divinamente inspirada, es util para enseñar &c.* This is also the rendering of the Syriac (Pesch.) and two Arabic Versions, and is followed by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and most of the Fathers. See the note in Griesbach. Tertullian represents the sense thus :—*Legimus, Omnem Scripturam, ædificationi habilem, divinitus inspirari.* De Habit. Mul. c. iii. Origen has it several times, Θεόπνευστος οὔσα, ὠφέλιμός ἐστι, and once as in the received text. Ed.]

all men somewhere or at some time, meet with an assurance that the hopes and fears, the thoughts and yearnings that proceed from, or tend to, a right spirit in us, are not dreams or fleeting singularities, no voices heard in sleep, or spectres which the eye suffers but not perceives. As if on some dark night a pilgrim, suddenly beholding a bright star moving before him, should stop in fear and perplexity. But lo! traveller after traveller passes by him, and each, being questioned whither he is going, makes answer, "I am following yon guiding Star!" The pilgrim quickens his own steps, and presses onward in confidence. More confident still will he be, if by the way side he should find, here and there, ancient monuments, each with its votive lamp, and on each the name of some former pilgrim, and a record that there he had first seen or begun to follow the benignant Star!

No otherwise is it with the varied contents of the Sacred Volume. The hungry have found food, the thirsty a living spring, the feeble a staff, and the victorious warfarer songs of welcome and strains of music; and as long as each man asks on account of his wants, and asks what he wants, no man will discover aught

amiss or deficient in the vast and many-chambered storehouse. But if instead of this, an idler or a scoffer should wander through the rooms, peering and peeping, and either detects, or fancies he has detected, here a rusted sword or pointless shaft, there a tool of rude construction, and superseded by later improvements (and preserved, perhaps, to make us more grateful for them);—which of two things will a sober-minded man,—who from his childhood upward had been fed, clothed, armed, and furnished with the means of instruction from this very magazine,—think the fitter plan?—Will he insist that the rust is not rust, or that it is a rust *sui generis*, intentionally formed on the steel for some mysterious virtue in it, and that the staff and astrolabe of a shepherd astronomer are identical with, or equivalent to, the quadrant and telescope of Newton or Herschel?—Or will he not rather give the curious inquisitor joy of his mighty discoveries, and the credit of them for his reward?—

Or lastly, put the matter thus. For more than a thousand years the Bible, collectively taken, has gone hand in hand with civilization, science, law,—in short, with the moral and intellectual cultivation of the species, always

supporting, and often leading the way. Its very presence, as a believed Book, has rendered the nations emphatically a chosen race, and this too in exact proportion as it is more or less generally known and studied. Of those nations, which in the highest degree enjoy its influences, it is not too much to affirm, that the differences public and private, physical, moral and intellectual, are only less than what might be expected from a diversity in species. Good and holy men, and the best and wisest of mankind, the kingly spirits of history, enthroned in the hearts of mighty nations, have borne witness to its influences, have declared it to be beyond compare the most perfect instrument, the only adequate organ, of Humanity ;—the organ and instrument of all the gifts, powers, and tendencies, by which the individual is privileged to rise above himself—to leave behind, and lose his individual phantom self, in order to find his true Self in that Distinctness where no division can be,—in the Eternal I AM, the Ever-living WORD, of whom all the elect from the archangel before the throne to the poor wrestler with the Spirit *until the breaking of day* are but the fainter and still fainter echoes. And are all these testimonies and lights of



experience to lose their value and efficiency, because I feel no warrant of history, or Holy Writ, or of my own heart for denying, that in the framework and outward case of this instrument a few parts may be discovered of less costly materials and of meaner workmanship? Is it not a fact that the Books of the New Testament were tried by their consonance with the rule, and according to the analogy, of Faith? Does not the universally admitted canon—that each part of Scripture must be interpreted by the spirit of the whole—lead to the same practical conclusion as that for which I am now contending;—namely, that it is the spirit of the Bible, and not the detached words and sentences, that is infallible and absolute?—Practical, I say, and spiritual too;—and what knowledge not practical or spiritual are we entitled to seek in our Bibles? Is the grace of God so confined,—are the evidences of the present and actuating Spirit so dim and doubtful,—that to be assured of the same we must first take for granted that all the life and co-agency of our humanity is miraculously suspended?

Whatever is spiritual, is *eo nomine* supernatural; but must it be always and of necessity miraculous? Miracles could open the eyes of

the body ; and he that was born blind beheld his Redeemer. But miracles, even those of the Redeemer himself, could not open the eyes of the self-blinded, of the Sadducean sensualist or the self-righteous Pharisee ;—while to have said, *I saw thee under the fig tree*, sufficed to make a Nathanael believe.

To assert and to demand miracles without necessity was the vice of the unbelieving Jews of old ; and from the Rabbis and Talmudists the infection has spread. And would I could say that the symptoms of the disease are confined to the Churches of the Apostasy ! But all the miracles, which the legends of Monk or Rabbi contain, can scarcely be put in competition, on the score of complication, inexplicableness, the absence of all intelligible use or purpose, and of circuitous self-frustration, with those that must be assumed by the maintainers of this doctrine, in order to give effect to the series of miracles, by which all the nominal composers of the Hebrew nation before the time of Ezra, of whom there are any remains, were successively transformed into *automaton* compositors,—so that the original text should be in sentiment, image, word, syntax, and composition an exact impression of the divine copy !

In common consistency the theologians, who impose this belief on their fellow Christians, ought to insist equally on the superhuman origin and authority of the Masora, and to use more respectful terms, than has been their wont of late, in speaking of the false Aristeas's legend concerning the Septuagint. And why the miracle should stop at the Greek Version, and not include the Vulgate, I can discover no ground in reason. Or if it be an objection to the latter, that this belief is actually enjoined by the Papal Church, yet the number of Christians who read the Lutheran, the Genevan, or our own authorized, Bible, and are ignorant of the dead languages, greatly exceeds the number of those who have access to the Septuagint. Why refuse the writ of consecration to these, or to the one at least appointed by the assertors' own Church? I find much more consistency in the opposition made under pretext of this doctrine to the proposals and publications of Kennicot, Mill, Bentley, and Archbishop Newcome.

But I am weary of discussing a tenet, which the generality of divines and the leaders of the Religious Public have ceased to defend, and yet continue to assert or imply. The tendency

manifested in this conduct, the spirit of this and the preceding century, on which, not indeed the tenet itself, but the obstinate adherence to it against the clearest light of reason and experience, is grounded,—this it is which, according to my conviction, gives the venom to the error, and justifies the attempt to substitute a juster view. As long as it was the common and effective belief of all the Reformed Churches, (and by none was it more sedulously or more emphatically enjoined than by the great Reformers of our Church), that by the good Spirit were the spirits tried, and that the light, which beams forth from the written Word, was its own evidence for the children of light;—as long as Christians considered their Bible as a plenteous entertainment, where every guest, duly called and attired, found the food needful and fitting for him, and where each—instead of troubling himself about the covers not within his reach—beholding all around him glad and satisfied, praised the banquet and thankfully glorified the Master of the feast,—so long did the Tenet—that the Scriptures were written under the special impulse of the Holy Ghost remain safe and profitable. Nay, in the sense,

and with the feelings, in which it was asserted, it was a truth—a truth to which every spiritual believer now and in all times will bear witness by virtue of his own experience. And if in the overflow of love and gratitude they confounded the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, working alike in weakness and in strength, in the morning mists and in the clearness of the full day;—if they confounded this communion and co-agency of divine grace, attributable to the Scripture generally, with those express, and expressly recorded, communications and messages of the Most High, which form so large and prominent a portion of the same Scriptures;—if, in short, they did not always duly distinguish the inspiration, the imbreathment, of the predisposing and assisting SPIRIT from the revelation of the informing WORD,—it was at worst a harmless hyperbole. It was holden by all, that if the power of the Spirit from without furnished the text, the grace of the same Spirit from within must supply the comment.

In the sacred Volume they saw and revered the bounden wheat-sheaf that *stood upright*, and had *obeisance* from all the other sheaves—(the writings, I mean, of the Fathers

and Doctors of the Church)—sheaves depreciated indeed, more or less, with tares,

and furrow-weeds,  
Darnel and many an idle flower that grew  
Mid the sustaining corn ;

yet sheaves of the same harvest, the sheaves of brethren ! Nor did it occur to them, that, in yielding the more full and absolute honor to the sheaf of the highly favoured of their Father, they should be supposed to attribute the same worth and quality to the straw-bands which held it together. The bread of life was there. And this in an especial sense was *bread from heaven* ; for no where had the same been found wild ; no soil or climate dared claim it for its natural growth. In simplicity of heart they received the Bible as the precious gift of God, providential alike in origin, preservation, and distribution, without asking the nice question, whether all and every part were likewise miraculous. The distinction between the providential and the miraculous, between the divine Will working with the agency of natural causes, and the same Will supplying their place by a special *fiat*—this distinction has, I doubt not, many uses in speculative divinity. But its

weightiest practical application is shown, when it is employed to free the souls of the unwary and weak in faith from the nets and snares, the insidious queries and captious objections, of the Infidel by calming the flutter of their spirits. They must be quieted, before we can commence the means necessary for their disentanglement. And in no way can this be better effected than when the frightened captives are made to see in how many points the disentangling itself is a work of expedience rather than of necessity ;—so easily and at so little loss might the web be cut or brushed away !

First, let their attention be fixed on the history of Christianity as learnt from universal tradition, and the writers of each successive generation. Draw their minds to the fact of the progressive and still continuing fulfilment of the assurance of a few fishermen, that both their own religion, though of divine origin, and the religion of their conquerors, which included or recognized all other religions of the known world, should be superseded by the faith in a man recently and ignominiously executed. Then induce them to meditate on the universals of Christian Faith,—on Christianity, taken as the sum of belief common to Greek and Latin, to

Romanist and Protestant. Shew them that this and only this is the *ordo traditionis, quam tradiderunt Apostoli iis quibus committebant ecclesias*, and which we should have been bound to follow, says Irenæus, *si neque Apostoli quidem Scripturas reliquissent*. This is that *regula fidei*, that *sacramentum symboli memoriæ mandatum*, of which St. Augustine says;—*noveritis hoc esse Fidei Catholicæ fundamentum super quod edificium surrexit Ecclesiæ*. This is the *norma Catholici et Ecclesiastici sensus*, determined and explicated, but not augmented, by the Nicene Fathers, as Waterland has irrefragably shewn;—a norm or model of Faith grounded on the solemn affirmations of the Bishops collected from all parts of the Roman Empire, that this was the essential and unalterable Gospel received by them from their predecessors in all the Churches as the *παράδοσις ἐκκλησιαστικὴ*, *cui*, says Irenæus, *assentiunt multæ gentes eorum qui in Christum credunt sine charta et atramento, scriptam habentes per Spiritum in cordibus suis salutem, et veterum traditionem diligenter custodientes*. Let the attention of such as have been shaken by the assaults of Infidelity be thus directed, and then tell me wherein a



spiritual physician would be blameworthy, if he carried on the cure by addressing his patient in this manner :—

“ All men of learning, even learned unbelievers, admit that the greater part of the objections, urged in the popular works of Infidelity, to this or that verse or chapter of the Bible prove only the ignorance or dishonesty of the objectors. But let it be supposed for a moment that a few remain hitherto unanswered, —nay, that to your judgment and feelings they appear unanswerable. What follows? That the Apostles’ and Nicene Creed is not credible, the Ten Commandments not to be obeyed, the clauses of the Lord’s Prayer not to be desired, or the Sermon on the Mount not to be practised?—See how the logic would look. David cruelly tortured the inhabitants of Rabbah (2 *Sam.* xii. 31. 1 *Chr.* xx. 3.) and in several of the Psalms he invokes the bitterest curses on his enemies : therefore it is not to be believed that *the love of God toward us was manifested in sending his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him* (1 John iv. 9). Or : Abijah is said to have collected an army of 400,000 men, and Jeroboam to have met him with an army of 800,000, each army

consisting of chosen men (2 *Chr.* xiii. 3.), and making together a host of 1,200,000, and Abijah to have slain 500,000 out of the 800,000: therefore, the words which admonish us that *if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another* (1 John iv. 11.), even our enemies, yea, *to bless them that curse us, and to do good to them that hate us* (Matt. v. 44.), cannot proceed from the Holy Spirit. Or: The first six chapters of the Book of Daniel contain several words and phrases irreconcilable with the commonly received dates, and those chapters and the Book of Esther have a traditional and legendary character unlike that of the other historical books of the Old Testament: therefore, those other books, by contrast with which the former appear suspicious, and the historical document, 1 *Cor.* xv. 1—8, are not to be credited!"

We assuredly believe that the Bible contains all truths necessary to salvation, and that therein is preserved the undoubted Word of God. We assert likewise that, besides these express oracles and immediate revelations, there are Scriptures which to the soul and conscience of every Christian man bear irresistible evidence of the Divine Spirit assisting and actuating the authors; and

that both these and the former are such as to render it morally impossible that any passage of the small inconsiderable portion, not included in one or other of these, can supply either ground or occasion of any error in faith, practice, or affection, except to those who wickedly and wilfully seek a pretext for their unbelief. And if in that small portion of the Bible which stands in no necessary connection with the known and especial ends and purposes of the Scriptures, there should be a few apparent errors resulting from the state of knowledge then existing-- errors which the best and holiest men might entertain uninjured, and which without a miracle those men must have entertained; if I find no such miraculous prevention asserted, and see no reason for supposing it--may I not, to ease the scruples of a perplexed inquirer, venture to say to him: "Be it so. What then? The absolute infallibility even of the inspired writers in matters altogether incidental and foreign to the objects and purposes of their inspiration is no part of my Creed; and even if a professed divine should follow the doctrine of the Jewish Church so far as not to attribute to the *Hagiographi*, in every word and sentence, the same height and fullness of inspiration

as to the Law and the Prophets, I feel no warrant to brand him as a heretic for an opinion, the admission of which disarms the Infidel without endangering a single article of the Catholic Faith.”—If to an unlearned but earnest and thoughtful neighbour, I give the advice;—“ Use the Old Testament to express the affections excited, and to confirm the faith and morals taught you, in the New, and leave all the rest to the students and professors of theology and Church history! You profess only to be a Christian:”—am I misleading my brother in Christ?

This I believe by my own dear experience,—that the more tranquilly an inquirer takes up the Bible as he would any other body of ancient writings, the livelier and steadier will be his impressions of its superiority to all other books, till at length all other books and all other knowledge will be valuable in his eyes in proportion as they help him to a better understanding of his Bible. Difficulty after difficulty has been overcome from the time that I began to study the Scriptures with free and unboding spirit, under the conviction that my faith in the Incarnate Word and his Gospel was secure, whatever the result might be;—the difficulties that still re-

main being so few and insignificant in my own estimation, that I have less personal interest in the question than many of those who will most dogmatically condemn me for presuming to make a question of it.

So much for scholars—for men of like education and pursuits as myself. With respect to Christians generally, I object to the consequence drawn from the Doctrine rather than to the Doctrine itself;—a consequence not only deducible from the premisses, but actually and imperiously deduced; according to which every man that can but read is to sit down to the consecutive and connected perusal of the Bible under the expectation and assurance that the whole is within his comprehension, and that, unaided by note or comment, catechism or liturgical preparation, he is to find out for himself what he is bound to believe and practise, and that whatever he conscientiously understands by what he reads, is to be *his* religion. For he has found it in his Bible, and the Bible is the Religion of Protestants!

Would I then withhold the Bible from the Cottager and the Artisan?—Heaven forefend! The fairest flower that ever clomb up a cottage window is not so fair a sight to my eyes, as

the Bible gleaming through the lower panes. Let it but be read as by such men it used to be read ; when they came to it as to a ground covered with manna, even the bread which the Lord had given for his people to eat ; where he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack. They gathered every man according to his eating. They came to it as to a treasure-house of Scriptures ; each visitant taking what was precious and leaving as precious for others ;—Yea, more, says our worthy old Church-historian, Fuller, where “the same man at several times may in his apprehension prefer several Scriptures as best, formerly most affected with one place, for the present more delighted with another, and afterwards, conceiving comfort therein not so clear, choose other places as more pregnant and pertinent to his purpose. Thus God orders it, that divers men, (and perhaps the same man at divers times) make use of all his gifts, gleaning and gathering comfort, as it is scattered through the whole field of the Scripture.”

Farewell.

## LETTER VII.

YOU are now, my dear Friend, in possession of my whole mind on this point,—one thing only excepted which has weighed with me more than all the rest, and which I have therefore reserved for my concluding Letter. This is the impelling principle, or way of thinking, which I have in most instances noticed in the assertors of what I have ventured to call Bibliolatry, and which I believe to be the main ground of its prevalence at this time, and among men whose religious views are any thing rather than enthusiastic. And I here take occasion to declare, that my conviction of the danger and injury of this principle was and is my chief motive for bringing the Doctrine itself into question;—the main error of which consists in the confounding of two distinct con-



ceptions, revelation by the Eternal Word, and actuation of the Holy Spirit. The former indeed is not always or necessarily united with the latter—the prophecy of Balaam is an instance of the contrary—, but yet being ordinarily, and only not always, so united, the term, Inspiration, has acquired a double sense.

First, the term is used in the sense of Information miraculously communicated by voice or vision ; and secondly, where without any sensible addition or infusion, the writer or speaker uses and applies his existing gifts of power and knowledge under the predisposing, aiding, and directing actuation of God's Holy Spirit. Now—between the first sense, that is, inspired revelation, and the highest degree of that grace and communion with the Spirit, which the Church under all circumstances, and every regenerate member of the Church of Christ, is permitted to hope, and instructed to pray, for—there is a positive difference of kind,—a chasm, the pretended overleaping of which constitutes imposture, or betrays insanity. Of the first kind are the Law and the Prophets, no jot or tittle of which can pass unfulfilled, and the substance and last interpretation of which passes not away ; for they wrote of Christ, and shadowed out the



everlasting Gospel. But with regard to the second, neither the holy writers—the so called *Hagiographi*—themselves, nor any fair interpretations of Scripture, assert any such absolute diversity, or enjoin the belief of any greater difference of degree, than the experience of the Christian World, grounded on, and growing with, the comparison of these Scriptures with other works holden in honor by the Churches, has established. And *this* difference I admit; and doubt not that it has in every generation been rendered evident to as many as read these Scriptures under the gracious influence of the spirit in which they were written.

But alas! this is not sufficient; this cannot but be vague and unsufficing to those, with whom the Christian Religion is wholly objective, to the exclusion of all its correspondent subjective. It must appear vague, I say, to those whose Christianity, as matter of belief, is wholly external, and, like the objects of sense, common to all alike;—altogether historical, an *opus operatum*,—its existing and present operancy in no respect differing from any other fact of history, and not at all modified by the supernatural principle in which it had its origin in time. Divines of this persuasion are actually,

though without their own knowledge, in a state not dissimilar to that, into which the Latin Church sank deeper and deeper from the sixth to the fourteenth century ; during which time religion was likewise merely objective and superstitious,—a letter proudly emblazoned and illuminated, but yet a dead letter that was to be read by its own outward glories without the light of the Spirit in the mind of the believer. The consequence was too glaring not to be anticipated and, if possible, prevented. Without that spirit in each true believer, whereby we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error in all things appertaining to salvation, the consequence must be—So many men, so many minds !—And what was the antidote which the Priests and Rabbis of this purely objective Faith opposed to this peril ?—Why, an objective, outward Infallibility ; concerning which, however, the differences were scarcely less or fewer than those which it was to heal ;—an Infallibility, which, taken literally and unqualified, became the source of perplexity to the well-disposed, of unbelief to the wavering, and of scoff and triumph to the common enemy ;—and which was, therefore, to be qualified and limited, and then it meant so much and so little,

that to men of plain understandings and single hearts it meant nothing at all. It resided here. No! there. No! but in a third subject. Nay! neither here, nor there, nor in the third, but in all three conjointly!

But even this failed to satisfy; and what was the final resource,—the doctrine of those who would not be called a Protestant Church, but in which doctrine the Fathers of Protestantism in England would have found little other fault, than that it might be affirmed as truly of the decisions of any other Bishop as of the Bishop of Rome? The final resource was to restore what ought never to have been removed—the correspondent subjective, that is, the assent and confirmation of the Spirit promised to all true believers, as proved and manifested in the reception of such decision by the Church Universal in all its rightful members.

I comprise and conclude the sum of my conviction in this one sentence. Revealed Religion (and I know of no religion not revealed) is in its highest contemplation the unity, that is, the identity or co-inherence, of Subjective and Objective. It is in itself, and irrelatively, at once inward Life and Truth, and outward Fact and Luminary. But as all Power manifests itself

in the harmony of correspondent Opposites, each supposing and supporting the other,—so has Religion its objective, or historic and ecclesiastical pole, and its subjective, or spiritual and individual pole. In the miracles, and miraculous parts of religion—both in the first communication of divine truths, and in the promulgation of the truths thus communicated—we have the union of the two, that is, the subjective and supernatural displayed objectively—outwardly and phenomenally—*as* subjective and supernatural.

Lastly, in the Scriptures, as far as they are not included in the above as miracles, and in the mind of the believing and regenerate Reader and Meditater, there is proved to us the reciprocity, or reciprocation, of the Spirit as subjective and objective, which in conformity with the Scheme proposed by me, in aid of distinct conception and easy recollection, I have named the Indifference\*. What I mean by this, a fami-

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\* The Papacy elevated the Church to the virtual exclusion or suppression of the Scriptures: the modern Church of England, since Chillingworth, has so raised up the Scriptures as to annul the Church: both alike have quenched the Holy Spirit, as the *mesothesis* or in-

liar acquaintance with the more popular parts of Luther's Works, especially his Commentaries, and the delightful volume of his Table Talk, would interpret for me better than I can do for myself. But I do my best, when I say that no Christian probationer, who is earnestly working out his salvation, and experiences the conflict of the spirit with the evil and the infirmity within him and around him, can find his own state brought before him and, as it were, antedated, in writings reverend even for their antiquity and enduring permanence, and far more, and more abundantly, consecrated by the reverence, love, and grateful testimonies of good men through the long succession of ages, in every generation, and under all states of minds and circumstances of fortune,—that no man, I say, can recognize his own inward experiences in such Writings, and not find an objectiveness, a confirming and assuring outwardness, and all the main characters of reality, reflected therefrom on the spirit, working in himself and in

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difference of the two, and substituted an alien compound for the genuine Preacher, which should be the *synthesis* of the Scriptures and the Church, and the sensible voice of the Holy Spirit."—*Lit. Rem.* v. iii. p. 93. *Ed.*

his own thoughts, emotions, and aspirations—warring against sin, and the motions of sin. The unsubstantial, insulated Self passes away as a stream; but these are the shadows and reflections of the Rock of Ages, and of the Tree of Life that starts forth from its side.

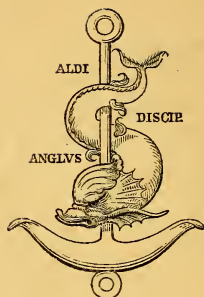
On the other hand, as much of reality, as much of objective truth, as the Scriptures communicate to the subjective experiences of the Believer, so much of present life, of living and effective import, do these experiences give to the letter of these Scriptures. In the one *the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit*, that we have received the *spirit of adoption*; in the other our spirit bears witness to the power of the Word, that it is indeed the Spirit that proceedeth from God. If in the holy men thus actuated all imperfection of knowledge, all participation in the mistakes and limits of their several ages had been excluded, how could these Writings be or become the history and example, the echo and more lustrous image of the work and warfare of the sanctifying Principle in us?—If after all this, and in spite of all this, some captious litigator should lay hold of a text here or there—St. Paul's *cloak left at Troas with Carpus*, or a verse from the Canticles,

and ask : “ Of what spiritual use is this ? ”—the answer is ready :—It proves to us that nothing can be so trifling as not to supply an evil heart with a pretext for unbelief.

Archbishop Leighton has observed that the Church has its extensive and intensive states, and that they seldom fall together. Certain it is that since kings have been her nursing fathers, and queens her nursing mothers, our theologians seem to act in the spirit of fear rather than in that of faith ; and too often instead of inquiring after the Truth in the confidence, that whatever is truth must be fruitful of good to all who *are in Him that is true*, they seek with vain precautions *to guard against the possible inferences* which perverse and distempered minds may pretend, whose whole Christianity,—do what we will—is and will remain nothing but a Pretence.

You have now my entire mind on this momentous Question, the grounds on which it rests, and the motives which induce me to make it known ; and I now conclude by repeating my request—Correct me, or confirm me.

Farewell.



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